

## The Random Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle

John Charnock the chilling presence that lingered within the hallowed walls of Astley Hall, reminding all who entered that some secrets of the past refuse to stay buried.

The historic town of Chorley in Lancashire was known for its rich history and its fair share of mysteries. Among the tales whispered through the centuries, the legend of John Charnock was one that sent shivers down the spines of the locals. Astley Hall, a grand mansion nestled amidst sprawling gardens, was the setting for this chilling story.

Astley Hall, with its ivy-clad walls and antique charm, had stood for centuries as a silent witness to the passage of time. One dark tale that clung to its ancient stones was that of John Charnock, a name etched in history for his involvement in the infamous Babington Plot of 1586.

Condemned to the gallows for treason against Queen Elizabeth I, John Charnock had met his end with his neck in the hangman's noose.

However, it was said that John's spirit refused to depart from this world. His childhood home, Astley Hall, seemed to be his eternal haunt. As the night fell, and the moon cast eerie shadows on the cobbled paths, locals whispered tales of a shadowy figure pacing the hallways, his footsteps echoing through the empty chambers.

Visitors who dared to stay overnight in the old mansion often spoke of a presence in the house—a cold, lingering energy that sent shivers down their spines. The legend of John Charnock had turned Astley Hall into a place where the living feared to tread after dark.

But John Charnock was not the only restless soul who wandered the corridors of Astley Hall. There were other apparitions that added to the mansion's eerie reputation. A lady in grey was often seen, her ghostly form gliding gracefully through the grand ballroom, as if still awaiting a long-lost dance partner. Another lady, dressed in turquoise, was spotted in the garden, her mournful gaze fixed on a forgotten rosebush.

The most heart-wrenching of all the spirits was that of a little girl, dressed in Elizabethan clothes.

It was said that she had drowned in the nearby lake centuries ago, and now her spirit played by the water's edge, her laughter echoing in the night.

As if the mansion itself was a portal to the past, the most recent ghostly encounter came as a shock to the locals. A phantom gamekeeper and his loyal dog were spotted patrolling the grounds by the riverbank. They walked as if bound by duty, never straying from their patrol route, even in the afterlife.

Astley Hall had become a magnet for those who sought to witness the supernatural. Ghost hunters and thrill-seekers came from far and wide, armed with cameras and voice recorders, hoping to capture evidence of the spectral inhabitants of the mansion. They often left with chilling tales and hair-raising photographs, confirming the eerie reputation of this ancient abode.

Through the centuries, the stories of John Charnock and the other ghosts of Astley Hall had melded into the tapestry of Chorley's history. Whether one believed in the paranormal or not, there was no denying the chilling presence that lingered within the hallowed walls of Astley Hall, reminding all who entered that some secrets of the past refuse to stay buried.

By Donald Jay